

secured a loyal corporation; but **if** the Abbot granted a similar privilege, he only raised a more formidable rival at his doors. Tenacity of privilege was the marked feature of all sections of the Church in all matters, and this case formed no exception.

There were three possible remedies for towns thus stunted in their growth—violence, law-suit, and legislation. Violence seems to have been the favourite expedient; but it was of little use, because the party attacked could always call in the royal power. By law-suits, again, nothing could be done. Though law can serve to protect what has been already conceded, it cannot be used to obtain new privilege. However much the secular courts disliked the Church, they could not dispute the legality of her ancient and undoubted rights. The one remaining way by which remedy could be sought was to obtain new laws. But Parliament was not at that time an effective instrument for reform. To alter by legislation established rights of individuals and public bodies was no less unusual in the time of Eichard the Second than under the regime that was ended by the first Reform Bill and the Municipal Corporation Act. There were besides special difficulties in touching ecclesiastical property.

So it came about that those towns which suffered from subjection to the Church were forced to wait. Instead of evolution in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, there was revolution in the sixteenth. Then, * when temple and tower went to the ground,' it was a day of vengeance for the wrongs of ancestors, the settling of scores generations old. The unnecessary destruction of so many monastic buildings, the ruin of so many abbey-churches not inferior in size and splendour to cathedrals, though originated by the royal order, must in many cases have been a work of delight to the burghers. To-day the people of St. Edrnundsbury stroll at evening through the town gardens which were once those of the abbey, and point with just pride to the beautiful towers that overshadow them. Little do they dream of the loathing, the rage, the despair, with which their ancestors looked up at those towers, the blind fury with which they stormed into